Alpha Three
by H.L. Pauff

"Jer-ry, it would appear that you are upset. Are you indeed upset?"

Jerry leaned his head against the window and sighed. Outside, the wind whipped the red dirt against the outer shell of the habitat. It reminded him of the heavy summer rains pelting the roof of his home in South Carolina.

"Yes, Alpha Three I am upset. Stop asking me."

Jerry turned away from the window to face the box on wheels. Its camera would scan his face, looking for the answers.

"Forgive me, Jer-ry. I do not understand," the mechanical voice said, its box lighting up when it spoke. "Are you upset because the others are not coming?"

"They're coming."

"Forgive me, Jer-ry, but it has been one thousand nine hundred and eighty-three days, five hours, twenty-six minutes and — "

"I get it, Alpha Three. They'll make it. They are just delayed or something."

"Statistically speaking, Jer-ry, the probability of their arrival is — "

"Don't say it."

"And the probability that they will survive on this planet is less than five percent. Communications, oxygen supply and solar conversion have been damaged. Estimated time until total habitat failure is — "

"Please don't tell me. I don't want to know." Jerry leaned his head against the window. "I hate this place. I haven't seen another human for years. I can't even call my wife. And you're the most annoying person…thing ever. I wish I had gotten stuck with a more tolerable robot."

"Would you like it if I — "

"No."

"But Jer-ry, you did not know what I was going to — "

"Doesn't matter."

Alpha Three's gears churned as it spun around in a circle. "Doctor Nelson has missed his last three hundred scheduled maintenances on this unit's systems. This unit operates at only five percent efficiency. In order to prolong operation of vital systems of this habitat, I must shut all of my systems downnnnnnnnn."

"Alpha Three? Alpha Three, turn back on this instant. Don't leave me alone here."